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Nazir Ahmad Simab (ra)

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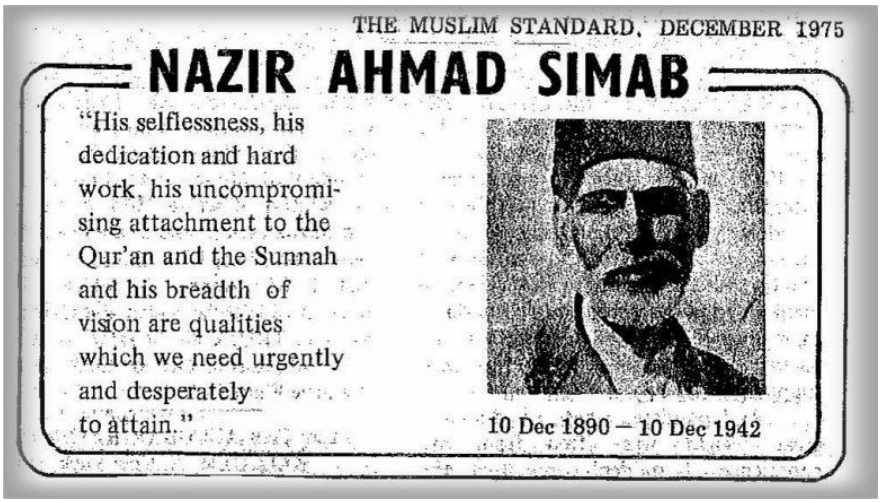
THE MUSLIM STANDARD, DECEMBER 1975
NAZIR AHMAD SIMAB
"His selflessness, his dedication and hard work, his uncompromising attachment to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and his breadth of vision are qualities which we need urgently and desperately to attain."
10 Dec 1890 — 10 Dec 1942

Nazir Ahmad Simab (ra)

POSTED BY: THE MUSLIM STANDARD FEBRUARY 3, 2009

Islamic scholar Maulana Nazir Ahmad Simab came from Lahore, India, in 1935. In the "History of the El Socorro Jamaat", Muzaffar reports that "*In 1934 the association delegated Syed Mohammed Hosein to India in search of a*

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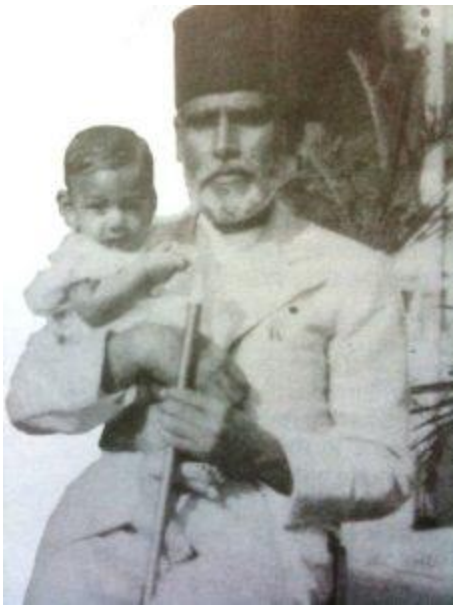

Nazir Ahmad Simab (ra)

qualified Moulvi. At the end of 1935 Syed Hosien arrived with Nazir Ahmed Simab Munshi Fazli." "At the end of 1936, the excutive of ASJA held a meeting at the residence of Mr. S. M. Mustapha, El Socorro Road, San Juan, and decided that the services of Moulana Nazir Ahmad Simab be dispensed with, no just cause being given for his dismissal. The Mowlana sailed from Trinidad in the middle of 1937 for his homeland." (Muzaffar 1967 Pgs 61-63). In 1939 Maulana Nazir Ahmad return to Trinidad was arranged by some of his dedicated students, Kamaluddin Mohammed amongst them. He continued to teach, give khutbahs (sermons) and publish his writings until his early demise in 1942.

The Trinidad publication, the Muslim Standard, eulogized Nazir Ahmad Simab, in its 3rd issue published in December 1975 as follows:

Thirty-three years ago, on December 10 1942, at Waterloo Road in Arouca-thousands of miles away from his birthplace in Lahore- Nazir Ahmad Simab died. He was exactly 52 years old. He was buried at the far southwestern corner of the El Socorro Muslim cemetery in San Juan. His funeral was attended by thousands of Muslims from all over the island-a testimony to the high esteem in which he was held and to the great and pioneering contribution he made to the Muslim community in Trinidad.

Although he spent only five years in the country, (from June 1935 to August 1937.and from March 1939 to his death in 1942) his work stands out perhaps more prominently than that of any single individual in the history of Muslims in Trinidad. Even now there is much

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that can be gained from a study of the character and the achievements of Nazir Ahmad Simab, achievements which seem all the more impressive bearing in mind the conditions under' which he worked. His selflessness, his dedication and hard work his uncompromising attachment to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and his breadth of vision are qualities which we need urgently and desperately to attain.

SELFLESSNESS

Nazir Ahmad Simab Memorial Masjid, Charlieville, Trinidad and Tobago

Nazir Ahmad was a teacher, an avid writer in the Punjab where he lived with his wife and five children. "I was well happy at my home," he recalled, "drawing a handsome salary." He was a member of an association called the Anjuman Khuddam-I-Islam – the Servants of Islam Association. Recommended by this body, without his even asking, he came to Trinidad under the auspices of the Anjuman Sunnat wal Jamaat to do missionary work without even discussing pay and maintenance arrangements!

For almost five months after his arrival in Trinidad he was not paid and he had to send for money from India to defray his personal expenses. The Anjuman acknowledged its deficiency in an appeal (15 April 1937), which spoke of "the great inconvenience and material loss to himself, loss of 22 years service, pension and finance, which loss we are afraid the Muslims in Trinidad will not be able to make good".

In spite of these hardships in the first period of his stay, Nazir against the wishes of his family, decided to return to Trinidad to continue the work he had started 'in the path of God' – fi sabilillah. It is painful to recall that

Allah, the Exalted, says: "Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbour who...

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during this second period he was accused of hatching a "scheme to disorganize the community, and forming a third party for the sake of Dal Rotee". He replied to these charges saying, "May the curse of God be upon the liars" and "requesting the Muslims to say AMEEN". He went on to make a plea for "drastic reformation" of the Anjuman. The details of these events show the great integrity of the man and how incorruptible he was in his dealings with others.

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HARD WORK

Nazir Ahmad's efforts as a missionary was concentrated on teaching and writing. His students speak of his "great energy and his enterprising efforts". He lectured throughout the island. He held large classes, to which students cycled for miles to attend, at San Juan, Charlieville, Bank Village, Debe, Arouca and San Fernando. He taught Arabic, Urdu and Qur'anic exegesis.

During the second period of his stay, Nazir Ahmad started a weekly publication in English and Urdu which he wrote himself and distributed free of cost. The publication contained the weekly Friday sermon and a Children's Page dealing with Islamic advices and Islamic history.

He had to raise funds for most of his projects and was even instrumental in setting up a dry goods store in Arouca.

UNCOMPROMISING BUT GENIAL

Nazir Ahmad's knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith was very profound and so was ~ his knowledge .of Islamic history. He was a vigorous pamphleteer and many were the occasions on which he took a fearless and courageous stand when he felt hat the foundations of Islam and Islamic principles were being compromised.
For example, he spoke out against the Anjuman Sunnat wal Jamaat for presenting 48 copies of an Urdu translation of the Qur'an to the Imams of the country

with instruction to use it for their congregations. He commented on this as follows:

"The translation in question teaches that (a) to call the prophets Bashar (or human being) is Kufr, (b) that he Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was only in outward appearance a human being, (c) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is Omnipresent and Omniscient, (d) that the sins of all the past, present and future Muslims have already been forgiven for the sake of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and (e) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ knows all the Unseen of the past, present and the future and God taught him all the Unseen and (f) to invoke the dead saints and prophets for help is lawful, the dead 'hear our prayers and help us. These teachings are nothing but KUFR and SHIRK ..." When these things were objected to, they (the Anjuman) began, to defend FALSEHOOD ... "and thus they are endeavouring to disorganize the solidarity of the community, but to fool the Muslims they lay charges against me ..."

It was over this issue that he came into sharp conflict with Haji Ruknuddin Sahib, the Qazi of Trinidad. On this issue he was accused of being a Wahhabi and of "making mischief in the community".

Characteristically, he also "raised his voice" against the unlawful trade of selling pork "which was being carried on by one of the prominent officials of the Anjuman Sunnat wal Jamaat " during his first stay. The Anjuman in a "fit of fury" dispensed with his services.

Another example of his uncompromising stand was his efforts to have Captain Daniel, Deputy Director of Education in the Colony and author of the West Indian History book to have a statement alleging that Islam was spread by the sword deleted. In this he succeeded. In spite of his uncompromising stand, Nazir Ahmad was known to Muslims and others at large for his genial countenance and affability; his outstanding trait'.

BREADTH OF VISION

Nazir Ahmad saw the pressing need for education in the Colony. This is where he made his most significant contribution. With "almost superhuman efforts" he established in January 1942 the first lslamia school in the territory, at San Juan. It was the first non- Christian denominational school to gain government recognition.

He saw also the necessity of introducing English .as the medium of instruction not only in Trinidad but in the other British-held territories. To this end he started writing a series of books – the Highroads of Islam-but this task remained, uncompleted although the Urdu-version is still extant. He was also the first to deliver khutbas in English in the territory.

He also saw the need to present Islam to the non-Muslims by personal example and by organised efforts. If this aspect of his work was acted upon, the present Muslim community would probably not have been the introverted one it is today.

Many of the attitudes which Nazir Ahmad fought against, or was the victim of, unhappily still persist. Much of the work, particularly in the field of education, which he started has not developed along the lines he intended and devoted his life for thousands of miles from his home and family. There is much that can be learnt from his example and from his total and uncompromising commitment to Islam.

May God bless and reward him!

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